MSG - A Hidden Hazard
Category : December 1992
Published by Anonymous on Dec. 01, 1992

MSG - A Hidden Hazard

Tandavan, Devananda

There is an invisible substance that is contained in almost all prepared, canned, frozen, enhanced or packaged food. It is monosodium glutamate - MSG - which may produce many physical symptoms, such as headaches, joint pains, abdominal cramps, incontinence, diarrhea, blurred vision and even psychologic symptoms of depressions and neurosis. About 20-30% of all people are sensitive to the drug effects of this substance. We know this to be a true "drug effect" for it is a dose-related reaction. Less than two-percent of the population has a true allergic response.

MSG often triggers asthmatic responses of life-threatening proportions. It is common as a cause of sweating, flushing of the face, rapid heart beat, thirst, tingling around the mouth or throat and arthritic aches and pains. No body part or system is free from its effect. Not infrequently a chronic debilitating undiagnosed disease may clear totally when MSG is removed from the diet. Incontinence in children should make parents investigate junk and snack foods consumed.

In the USA, whenever MSG is added to a food product, its presence must be mentioned on the label. However, since glutamate is an amino acid and this salt does appear naturally, its presence can be hidden by calling it "natural flavors," "hydrolyzed vegetable protein" or "protein hydroxylates." These contain up to 20% MSG, so are to be shunned. It is the glutamate that is rapidly absorbed. At high levels within the blood, it produces these symptoms, proportional to the dose and the individual's sensitivity.

Every person may have different symptoms of MSG reaction, and the threshold of reaction will be different also. But the unifying fact is that as soon as the ingestion

of MSG is stopped, the symptoms will begin to abate. Infants and small children are very sensitive to even small doses of the drug so that the food industry has been kind enough to eliminate it from all infant foods. However, infants will often ingest it when adult food is introduced to them at the table. In order to eliminate this hidden drug from your diet, the first rule is to eat as much fresh and unprocessed food as you can obtain. Secondly, one must become an avid reader of labels and recognize that MSG, natural flavors, hydrolyzed vegetable protein (HVP), and even hydrolyzed plant protein may be listed and that each contains MSG. If the label says "all natural," read further to determine whether there is MSG present as one of these. Suspect all flavoring salts and products such as ketchup, Worcestershire and other sauces.

Why is MSG used so commonly? It is a flavor enhancer. It tends to sensitize the taste buds of the tongue. It helps the flavors to spread over the mouth, and it may be used to mask unpleasant flavors, cover up spoilage and staleness.

There are some chefs who claim that they are not able to cook without this flavor enhancer, although there are ready substitutes for it such as herbs, spices and lemon and other fruit and vegetable juices. There are millions of people who are reacting to this substance unknowingly and are completely unaware of the reasons for their increasing depressions and dis-ease.

Article copyright Himalayan Academy.